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FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0563  
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 7056  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 7373  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2704  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 5416  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 6543  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3149  
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 0262  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 4688  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2375  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 3600  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

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SUBJECT: NEPAL: POTENTIAL NEPALI AMBASSADOR TO U.S.  
IDENTIFIED

REF: KATHMANDU 697

11. (SBU) Summary: Foreign Minister Sujata Koirala has nominated Dr. Shankar Prasad Sharma as Ambassador to the United States. Sharma is a longtime economic advisor to the government and has been an adviser to the Koirala family. Political factors may derail the nomination, which must be approved by the Nepali cabinet, so it is by no means certain that Sharma will be reporting to Washington any time soon. End summary.

Nine Potential Ambassadors  
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12. (U) Post has confirmed July 30 press reports that Foreign Minister Sujata Koirala presented a list of nine ambassadorial candidates to the cabinet on July 29, including nominees to become ambassadors to the US, UK, UN, France, India, South Africa, Brazil, Kuwait, and Egypt. The cabinet, which includes the Nepali Congress (NC), the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (UML) and the Madhesi People's Rights Forum (MPRF) parties, must approve all ambassadorial nominations. According to a UML party member, party leaders are displeased and may not approve the nominations because all of the nominees are reportedly affiliated with Koirala's NC party. Cabinet members have thus decided to postpone any decision on approving the nominee list.

Ambassador to U.S.  
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13. (U) The nominee for Ambassador to the United States is Dr. Shankar Prasad Sharma. Sharma is a former Vice Chairman of the National Planning Commission and a Professor of Economics at Nepal's Tribhuvan University. He served as a Senior Economic Advisor to the Ministry of Finance and also worked at the East-West Center in Hawaii for eight years. He is a close personal adviser to Nepali Congress leader G.P. Koirala and the Koirala family. Sharma received his Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Hawaii in 1985. He went to the United States on an International Visitors Program in 1999. He was born in 1953 in Okhaldhunga District.

14. (SBU) Post has received no official request for agreement,

presumably because the cabinet has yet to approve the nomination. The previous Maoist government submitted an agreement request for another nominee to become U.S. Ambassador, but Koirala told Charge on July 28 that the current government wished to withdraw that request.

Katawal to France

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15. (SBU) According to press reports, the list of nominees also includes Nepal Army Chief of Staff General Rukmangad Katawal as Ambassador to France. Katawal announced earlier in the week that he intended to retire from the Army in September, in accordance with Army regulations. Koirala told Charge on July 28 that she was adamantly opposed to any ambassadorial nomination for Katawal (reftel), suggesting that colleagues in the government overruled her objections.

Comment

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16. (SBU) It is by no means certain that Dr. Sharma or the other nominees will be confirmed as ambassadors. UML contacts had neither positive nor negative comments about Sharma or any other nominees, but there was clear displeasure over the lack of inclusiveness in creating the ambassadorial list. It is possible that the list may be revised to accommodate other parties in the coalition government.

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